

most thoroughly; and hence his assertion that those are not only blind, but wilfully blind, who do not concur with him. It is possible that my mental vision may not be as acute as that of the gentleman from Accomac. It is possible I may unconsciously labour under some visual obstruction which exposes me to optical delusions, but I do assure the gentleman, that whatever be my defects in this particular, I am, to say the worst, fortunately not wilfully blind.

Perhaps it may be a delusion, but I am certainly impressed with the belief, that I have a clear perception of the fallacy of the gentleman's argument as well as the impolicy of the plan he proposes.

In the first place, let us scrutinize his constitutional argument. He contends that inasmuch as the several States had ceded their western territory to the Colonial Government, as a common fund to pay the debts growing out of our revolutionary struggle, and to defray the charge and expenditure of the several States, that the convention of 1787, which framed our constitution, must necessarily have had these lands in contemplation, when they framed that clause which gives Congress the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the country. That, looking to this almost boundless domain as a source of revenue, they framed this clause expressly in reference to it, and that any attempt to divert the funds arising from this source, so as to require all the expenses of the Government to be borne by taxes, direct or indirect, would be in violation of the constitution. This construction, Mr. Speaker, has at least the recommendation of novelty. I am sure there is not a gentleman within the sound of my voice, who ever dreamed of it before—nor can I believe it will find a response in the mind of a single member.

Can it be believed for a moment that an Assembly

composed of such men as prepared our constitution, could have committed a political blunder so palpable as to plant one of the main pillars of the Government upon an unsubstantial and evanescent foundation? Can it be believed that a body, composed of the first civilians of the age—men whose reputations for forecast and wisdom shine brighter with the lapse of time—would, in framing the constitution of a great nation, have committed a blunder so puerile and absurd as to have made the Government depend for its support upon lands which are every day diminishing in quantity, and which must sooner or later be entirely exhausted? Ages and centuries are but as days and weeks in the histories of nations, and it would be an indelible imputation upon the statesmen composing the convention of 1787, to establish the construction contended for by the gentleman from Accomac. It would make them perpetuate the incredible absurdity of providing a fund for the support of the Government, which would be constantly decreasing after a certain period, and which must ultimately be exhausted—constructing a chart of Government for a great nation, which it was hoped would maintain its principles and its integral existence dependent upon temporary and transient resources. But, to make this question still plainer, cast your eyes prospectively to that period when all these lands shall have been wrested from us by the plundering rapacity of the West—or, to the somewhat remoter period, when we shall be divested of them by the ordinary operation of the present land system. Then this Pactolus, which now pours its golden floods into the coffers of the Union, will be dried up and exhausted; and the Government, if the construction of the gentlemen obtains, left destitute of any mode of defraying its current expenses. This, Mr. Speaker, does appear to me to be a complete *reductio ad absurdum*, and of course establishes its own fallacy. The plain, obvious, common sense and

universally acquiesced in construction of the clause which gives to Congress the right to lay and collect taxes, etc., etc.; to pay the debts, and provide for the common defence, etc., is, that the General Government is to judge of the exigency, and then exercise its discretion in raising the means to meet it by taxes, direct or indirect. I am free to admit, Mr. Speaker, that the ardour and zeal which the gentleman has displayed in the support of a proposition so untenable has convinced me that he was sincere and honest in his assurance to the House, that his views on this subject were hastily concocted. Reflection, with a gentleman of his intelligence, would unquestionably have exposed its defects. The next branch of the gentleman's argument, though more plausible, is equally fallacious. He argues that in consequence of the increased and increasing necessities of the General Government, and the diminution of revenue, growing out of the Compromise Act of 1833, that an unconstitutional distribution of the proceeds of the public lands, would leave the Government unprovided with sufficient means to meet its wants and drive them to an increase of duties and a violation of the compromise. And, hence the propriety of his amendment, which, recognizing the constitutionality of distribution, restricts it to periods when there shall be a surplus beyond the economical wants of the Administration, and which further protests against any violation of the Compromise. At the first blush, the gentleman's argument would seem to be just and legitimate, but a little reflection will satisfy you, Mr. Speaker, that it will not stand the test of a rigid scrutiny.

Establish the gentleman's principle that there shall only be a distribution of the surplus beyond the economical wants of the Government; that the revenue derived from the sales of the public lands, must primarily be exhausted in the discharge of the public liabilities

before the Government can legitimately resort to another source, and what would be the condition of things? Does not the gentleman from Accomac see the constitutional as well as financial difficulties which would grow out of it? With heavy receipts from the sales of the public domain, such as we have witnessed for the last three or four years, there would be a sum sufficient under an *economical* administration of the Government, to defray all its expenses, without touching one cent of the revenue, derived from imposts under the Compromise Act. This would produce a *redundancy* in the Treasury by the continual influx from the Customs, which according to the gentleman's own principles, would be a violation of the spirit and meaning of the Compromise, and an unconstitutional exaction, as it would not be necessary to meet the burdens upon the revenue. But these, Mr. Speaker, are theoretical evils, such as often play the part of ghosts in Virginia, haunting the imagination and disturbing the sickly sensibilities of our "*unco righteous*," straight-laced politicians. They are rather possible than probable evils. But there are others of a grave and important character resulting necessarily and inevitably from the policy of the gentleman from Accomac. The truth is, however distant and widely separated may be the sources of our revenue, whether derived from the tariff, or lands, or excises, all the various streams are tributaries to a common reservoir, where they all mingle together for a common purpose, and lose the distinguishing features of their origin. The question is never raised whether an appropriation shall be made out of monies derived from any particular sources. The draft is on the Treasury, and the money taken from the commingled contents of the common reservoir. In this state of things is it not as plain as noon-day, that there would be a constant effort to raise the imposts, that the general fund might be

augmented, and a surplus created for distribution. The northern and western States, which are principally interested in the maintenance of the tariff, united with those States whose distributable share would compensate them for the burdens of the tariff, would scatter to the winds all the parchment and moral obligations of the Compromise Act, and compel an increase of duties. Could a finer field be presented for such combinations than the States of our Confederacy? Are they not peculiarly liable to temptation? Engaged as most of them are, in devising and carrying out comprehensive schemes of general education, and in projecting and executing magnificent schemes of internal improvement, both of which require the command of enormous sums of money, I ask, would they not yield to the seductive blandishments of their tariff friends, and unite in a scheme which promised to relieve their necessities and replenish their coffers? Add to this the intrigues of political gamblers for the Presidential chair, who would most assuredly trade largely upon this very available and efficient capital, and none can doubt the corrupting influence of the measure, and its direct and inevitable tendency to produce the very evils deprecated by the gentleman from Accomac, and sought to be guarded against in his amendment. But the gentleman finds the corrective to all this, in that part of his resolution which sanctified the Compromise Act. Does it afford the remedy? By that Act, Mr. Speaker, the duties are to be reduced to twenty per cent *ad valorem* in 1842. Now if this was an imperative and unyielding stipulation that there should be no articles other than those at present embraced in the tariff, subject to the duty of 1842, and that twenty per cent *ad valorem* would be the duty through all time and under all circumstances, then the gentleman's argument, that our policy endangered the Compromise, would have some plausi-

bility. But such is not the fact. In the year 1842, the duties, according to the scale agreed upon, will be twenty per cent. After which time it was agreed, that it should expand or contract according to the necessities of the Government *economically* administered. If the Government, according to this Utopian standard, required a revenue which this twenty per cent fell short of producing, then they were authorized by the Compromise Act to raise the duties to the point required by the expenditures. Hence, it is perfectly apparent, if you require an absolute distribution, and the necessities of the country should demand, what I think very improbable, larger means than is afforded by the Customs, under the reduced tariff of 1842, the duties may be augmented so far as to meet the exigency, without violating the letter or spirit of the Compromise.

As a general, and indeed almost universal rule, prudent individuals are economical according to the means they have at their disposal. As with individuals, so with Governments. The annals of private life and the pages of history alike attest its truth as a general proposition. Our own Government, whose spirit and genius is at war with extravagance and corruption, and which should have constituted the exception, if any were exempt, presents in its history the most exact conformity to the maxim. In the infancy of our institutions, when we were stinted in our resources, we prided ourselves upon our Republican simplicity, and the moral grandeur of a great nation disdaining the ostentatious trappings of Governmental grandeur, but as we advanced in population and wealth, the *spartan broth* yielded to the *plum pudding*; splendour was substituted for simplicity, until in the administration of the second Adams, our Governmental expenditures had reached the enormous sum of 13,000,000 dols. A sum so far beyond anything we had conceived necessary for its support, that he was

expelled almost with one voice from the Presidential chair. So deep and pervading was the dissatisfaction of the people, with these wasteful expenditures of the public treasure, that each successive Administration has made reform and retrenchment the watch words of party. And yet, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding we have gone forth to the battle with "economy" emblazoned upon our standard, the immense revenues pouring into our coffers from indemnities, public lands, and the customs, have exercised a counteracting influence, and our march in extravagance has been almost *pari passu* with our augmented income. In 1836 the expenditures had reached the almost incredible sum of 40,000,000 dols. Thus showing the tendency of our government to spend according to its means, and the visionary absurdity of the restraint imposed by the terms *economical expenditure*.

Pour the wealth of the Indies into our Treasury, and my word for it, the political doctors whom chance or fortune may have placed at the head of our affairs, will soon discover some happy depletive remedy for this oppressive *plethora*. National roads, fortifications, exploring expeditions, and the almost endless *et ceteras*, which are the natural fruit of ample means, become by a "log rolling" combination of the members of Congress, necessary and proper in their estimation, and professedly consistent with a judicious economy. Hence if the amendment of the gentleman (General Bayly) should prevail, reason and experience teaching us that the expenses of the Government will keep pace with its income and the terms of the Compromise, according to the construction of the gentleman, actually exhibiting a surplus, we cannot by possibility have the distribution which he recommends in the first part of the resolution, except in the way I have argued. The resolutions coupled with the gentleman's amendment is either a stimulant to evil, or it is a reality. It will

either drive us into fraudulent contributions for raising the duties, that we may have a surplus to distribute, or, according to the gentleman's own shewing, it will be utterly inoperative and ineffectual for any object we may have connected with the public lands. In both of which aspects I am utterly opposed to it.

I forbear, Mr. Speaker, launching into a more extended field of discussion, for the reason assigned when I first rose. Already I have extended my remarks further than I contemplated, and I hope the House will find an apology for it in the magnitude and importance of the subject, and the novelty of the positions assumed by the gentleman who preceded me.

CHAPTER X.

FOR some years previously to 1849 the question of popular education and Free schools had excited much interest in Virginia. One of the most earnest friends of a general system of education was Colonel Peyton, who made his views known in conversation, by communications to the newspapers and speeches at public meetings in Roanoke, and at a State Convention in Richmond. He left the important affairs of his Coal mining and river improvement projects in Boone county, at an inclement season and travelled nearly 400 miles over the wretched roads of Virginia, in a rickety stage coach, in order to attend this Convention, in which the writer was also a delegate from the county of Augusta. Such was the deep and enthusiastic interest he took in this vital subject. His private affairs were but as dust in the balance, when they were in conflict with those he owed to society.

From a lively recollection of his conversations and speeches at this period, the author is able to give the

following brief synopsis of his views on this interesting question.

He maintained that popular ignorance was one of the greatest curses that could afflict a people, and was altogether inconsistent with the theory and practice of Republican Government. Quoting the language of Hosea, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," he asserted that the ignorance which prevailed among the ancient Jewish people was the principal cause of their unhappiness, betraying them into crimes, and consequent miseries. It was this ignorance, this fatal lack of knowledge, which caused them to reject Jesus Christ and led to their destruction. He then considered the mental darkness which prevailed among the ancient heathen nations, and traced to it all their wretchedness. In their depravity they departed from the original ways of Providence, and set up false deities to be worshipped. All true morality and religion were destroyed amongst them, and the mass of mankind sank into darkness and woe. In his opinion, the only way to preserve the moral world was by a diffusion of true knowledge, by which men would be able to see what was wrong. From a consideration of the malignant effects of ignorance among the people of the ancient world, Jews and Gentiles, he passed in review the ignorance prevailing in subsequent ages, and finally came down to what was called the Augustan period of English literature, when Addison, Pope, Swift and other writers flourished, as well as philosophers, statesmen and heroes. Even at this period he said the mass of

English people were steeped in ignorance, and were considered by the educated as mere mental barbarians. An author never thought of his works being read by the debased multitude; they were composed for the educated few, who were recognised as a select community; and it was one of the most remarkable features of the times, that the cultivated part of the British nation regarded the mental and moral condition of the rest with the strangest indifference. To such an extent did ignorance prevail among the lower orders in England, that it might almost be called heathen at the time when Whitfield and Wesley began to excite the attention of the multitude to that subject. He then passed in review its effects upon the character of the English nation, and said that the gratification of their senses was then their chief good. It led to a disposition to cruelty, which was displayed and confirmed by their practices, such as prize fighting, cruelty to horses and the brutal way of slaughtering animals. And what was true of them would prove true of other people—fallen nature is the same everywhere. Education had done much, since the period to which he referred, to enlighten and educate the British people, and he trusted that Americans would not be insensible to their example. He said it was dishonourable to a country that the people should be allowed to remain in this condition, a monstrous thing in a Republic which was supposed to be governed by the people—they, at least, ought to be able to see that it was necessary to educate their children, unto whom they proposed in time

to pass the Government and the destinies of the country. He then considered in all its bearings the objection made to popular education by a certain class of thinkers—those who maintained that it would render the common people unfit for their station and discontented with it, and showed the absurdity of this proposition, and illustrated the advantage, to a wise and upright Government, of having intelligent citizens. He asserted that no pure religion could co-exist with this popular ignorance—that the want of mental discipline caused an inaptitude to receive religious information, and exemplified its truth by many striking examples.

From all these views on the subject of the disadvantages of ignorance and the evils and miseries it had entailed on mankind in the past, he went on to a practical examination of the subject of free Schools in Virginia, and maintained, That it was the interest of every member of the nation that every other member should be educated. Those who declared that a tax for this purpose was a hardship on those who had no children, forgot that a greater hardship would fall to their share if they did not educate the youth of the land, namely, that of keeping up jails, penitentiaries, guards, criminal judges, and the like. If education spread abroad, morality would also spread, and these concomitants of crime would not be needed. The money thus expended among an ignorant and vicious population would, in an enlightened community, go to construct roads, railways, bridges, canals, and other useful works.

Many men believed that education and morality had no connection with one another, but he held the opposite opinion. If it were false that education improves the morals, why does any father desire to educate his sons and daughters? If his educated children were the better for it, would not all be improved by it? If it were not a good thing, why are school-houses, colleges, universities rising every where over the land? But it was true that education improved, refined, and elevated the morals of a people, and where we found a college, there was a church, whence a divine morality was diffused. But, he said, education meant moral as well as intellectual development, and, in any system which might be adopted, he would advocate the study of the Holy Scriptures in the schools. After dilating on these points, and declaring that after a boy was taught to read and write he was subjected to new and powerful moral influences, he proceeded to enter upon a more practical branch of the subject, namely, the greater security it gave us.

Under our system of government, he said, the people ruled. We may, in time, come to rejoice or lament that this is so. Suffrage is extending, the Government becoming more democratic, property has less influence, and numbers more and more weight. What is our duty? To prepare for the change by a system of universal instruction. Then universal suffrage might be a blessing. There was no folly an ignorant mass, armed with universal suffrage, might not perpetrate. People in this condition are easily imposed on. Dema-

gogues would take advantage of them, lead them astray to their own and the public detriment. France, he said, had been afflicted by such demagogues or fanatics, who asserted that all property should be held in common, and such pretended friends of the people had inflicted the deadliest wounds upon the prosperity and happiness of that great nation. A similar class in the north were making an effort to do the like in America. Only the unthinking could be deluded by their sophistry. Suppose it were in their power to vote themselves a farm to-day, might not the same power vote it away to-morrow? The only permanent basis of prosperity, comfort, and happiness for any people, is in the knowledge possessed by each one of his duties as well as his rights, and the perfect security of both person and property. In matters of government as in personal concern, justice and right are always wisdom; that is, nothing is truly advantageous, which is not truly just.

The fathers of our Government had asserted these principles. Jefferson said, "I prepared three bills for the revisal, proposing three distinct grades of education, reaching all classes: 1st, Elementary schools for all children generally, rich and poor. 2nd, Colleges for a middle degree of instruction, calculated for the common purposes of life. 3rd, A higher grade for teaching the sciences generally, and in their loftiest degree." "One provision of the elementary school bill was that the expenses of these schools should be borne by the inhabitants of the county, in proportion to their general

tax rates." I considered four of these bills (the school bill was one) as forming a system whereby a foundation would be laid for a Government truly republican. The people, by the bill for a general education, would be qualified to understand their rights, to maintain them, and to exercise with intelligence, their parts in self-government, and all this would be effected without the violation of a single natural right of any one individual citizen.

Education was, in his opinion, essential to the social and intellectual well-being of the people, and should command the immediate attention of the Legislature. Otherwise the extension of the suffrage would prove a worthless, nay a dangerous gift. Intelligence is the condition of freedom; and unless the enfranchised millions are rendered, by education, capable of exercising their right of voting with sense and judgment, the people would become the dupes, the victims of unprincipled demagogues.

He went on to declare that general education developes new sources of wealth and utility, else why has it grown into a maxim that "knowledge is power." The truth is, the more you multiply knowledge, the more you increase the aggregate power of a community. What vast sums had been added to the annual production of manufacturing countries by the spinning-jenny, the power-loom, the steam-engine, the railroad, and the numberless labour-saving machines of recent years. All this resulted from educated labour. The reason why the useful arts advanced so slowly for centuries,

was because the labour of the world was performed by ignorant men.

Further, he expressed the opinion that general education increased the value of property. There were several elements which entered into the value of property, especially of land, besides its productiveness, such as the virtue and quietness of the neighbouring community, its character for progressive improvement, etc., which makes it desirable as a residence. Many examples were adduced from the more prosperous of the northern and eastern States, first, to establish this proposition, and, after further remarks, to prove that general education diffused among all classes will be found to make the labour of the country more useful, and of course more valuable. He proceeded to say that universal education could only be brought about by general *contribution*; and that this might be effected by a broad system having due regard to the respective needs of various religious bodies.

There were four modes of educating a people. 1. Every parent should be left to provide instruction for his own children. 2. The Government may aid the more indigent alone. 3. The Government may give partial assistance to all. 4. The Government may provide, at the common expense, for the complete elementary instruction of all classes, saving the requirements of religious liberty without discrimination. He examined all these systems in detail, and declared his opinion in favour of the fourth. At this point he went into an estimate of its cost, and showed that it would be light.

Besides, he said, the free schools would not only be cheaper than others, but would be better. The teachers would be more highly trained, better paid, there would be a judicious classification of pupils, suitable apparatus such as black boards, globes, maps, prints, models, etc., to aid the teacher to explain and the scholar to understand. These schools, too, would be under a vigilant supervision, which would encourage the teachers and stimulate the pupils. He concluded his remarks by suggesting a plan of the proposed system, which it is not necessary to give.

Most readers will be ready to concede, I imagine, that the man who held such enlightened views with regard to education was fully worthy of his age, if not in advance of it.

CHAPTER XI.

Few readers, save those who are intimately acquainted with the practical working of popular elections in America, will be prepared for some of the details of this chapter. At the next election the young and gallant delegate for Roanoke and Botetourt was opposed by the radical party, which put in nomination an illiterate person by the name of Prichard. Colonel Peyton did not wish to come forward at this time. He had already seen more than enough of political life, with its noisy ambition and its mean passions; a life so poor and base was unsuited to him. Of this he frankly informed his friends. These, however, urged him to serve another term with such pertinacity, upon the ground that he owed it to the country, that his disinclination was overcome. It was in a patriotic spirit alone that he yielded to their importunities—the spirit of Brutus which is thus expressed in the play of Julius Cæsar,

What is it you would impart to me ?
If it be ought towards the general good,

CC

Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,
And I will look on both indifferently :
For, let the gods so speed me, as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.

It was not upon the cards, however, that this irreproachable gentleman—this modern Chevalier Bayard *sans peur et sans reproche*—should be allowed to walk over the course. During his absence from home in the discharge of his public duties, the metropolitan and provincial leaders of the party of Martin Van Buren, called in the parlance of the day the *Locofoco* or ultra-democratic party, had been in incubation, and hatched a plot. The manner in which this formidable plot was concocted, who beside Thomas Ritchie and Bowyer Miller were its chiefs, what class beyond demagogues took part in it, at what precise time and upon what signals it was to break out, need not be recounted. For our purpose it is sufficient to premise, that fearing the influence exerted against their party in the Assembly by Colonel Peyton, and the greater power he was destined to wield, if he continued in public life, it was determined by the *Magi*, in Richmond, acting in concert with the local ringleaders, to bring, if possible, his political career to an end. The party organ in Richmond, the *Enquirer* newspaper, edited by Thomas Ritchie, struck the first note, and the provincials lost no time in taking up the tune and raising the hue and cry in Roanoke. Ritchie was a veteran at this sort of thing. He had long enjoyed pre-eminence as the most wily of Southern editors, had so unremittingly and

successfully pulled the wires and directed the machinery of Virginia Locofocoism that he was a pronounced Seer enjoying the soubriquet of "Father Ritchie." When he took snuff every Locofoco in the State was supposed to sneeze. This paternal bell-wether figured in the Richmond conclaves of the party and pointed out the road to success, and rarely was he mistaken as to the direction. In many respects he was an admirable guide and leader. He united in a remarkable manner the *fortiter in re* with the *suaviter in modo*. When he wished to carry a point he manœuvred with consummate skill. In his first essays he was as mild as last year's honey, spoke in dulcet strains. If his policy failed, this tune was quickly changed. He now uttered the harsh and authoritative language of a master, tried what virtue there was in stones. Success generally attended his strategy. If not, sad was the fate of his victim. If an honest and independant opponent closed his ears to his soft whispers, he was mercilessly put upon and hunted down. If an inexperienced member of his party ventured to think for himself, there was no greater crime at head-quarters, he soon learned what it was to run the gauntlet. He was warned by the *Enquirer* that an open enemy is better than a false friend, had a lecture upon a Judas, kiss, an essay upon sealing one's infamy, all the changes indeed, were rung upon his perfidy, his presumption, and rebellion. The whippers in-baited him in the legislative halls, denounced him in the streets, dogged him at his hotel—in a word, persecuted the miserable

wretch until, broken down in health and spirits, the contumacious bungler was only too glad to secure peace by an unconditional surrender, by a quiet return to his duty and allegiance. From such a contest with Father Ritchie the inexperienced member always retired a wiser and a sadder man. Indeed, he was generally wise enough to appear to relish his humble pie. He certainly always afterwards voted for his party, right or wrong, through thick and thin. When he had sufficiently expiated his offence the *Enquirer* gave him a cheerful pat upon the back, and, thus kept in countenance with his constituents the inexperienced member stood a chance of re-election, of becoming an experienced member.

Father Ritchie's watchful eye took in the entire State; he seemed universal in his knowledge of provincial affairs; his spirit pervaded, permeated, overspread our home politics far and wide. Whenever he saw a new star in the political firmament, a promising man rising up in the opposition his minions were set to work—first to win him over to the Locofoco party, if successful all was well—if not war was declared. Hostilities having thus commenced, nothing was neglected to make the war short, sharp, and decisive. Father Ritchie silenced the consciences of some of his tools, he had some understrappers not altogether devoid of moral sense, by the assurance that all is fair in politics as in love and war. With the prescience of an old leader, he saw danger to ultra democracy in the rise of Col. Peyton. Could the young man be won over? Were his convictions strong?

these were the questions to be settled. Flattery was first tried, *the Enquirer* declaring that the delegate for Roanoke was without a rival among the young men of Virginia, that he was the worthy son of a noble sire, that he was a ripe scholar and trained statesman, had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, was on the highway to honour and fame, that but a single danger beset his path, namely Federalism, of this rock he must beware, from such feticism turn away. Let him, said *the Enquirer*, advocate, liberal principles, in other words turn Locofoco, then every honour and reward, was his which a grateful and admiring people could confer, etc., etc. It was of no avail. Father Ritchie then tried ridicule and abuse, talked of the overweening vanity of young men, the idle dreams of youth, and so-forth. Col. Peyton was proof against both; all the insinuating arts of the veteran, all his and his minions' violence could not shake the resolution, or corrupt the integrity of William Peyton; he was absolutely proof against every threat, as against all oily flattery, and taught the venerable Ritchie that there was at least one exception to the maxim with politicians, "that every man has his price." *The Enquirer* then turned to its old course of personally complimenting Col. Peyton, in order the more successfully to disguise the party movements and privately and industriously set on the beagles of Roanoke. It advised the whippers-in of the peril which threatened, and of the importance of defeating the Colonel. These orders had no sooner been issued than the pursuit commenced. The principal director and

driver on the occasion of these proceedings was *Bowyer Miller*, a young attorney, a candidate for practice in Fincastle. Miller was ambitious and slippery, not without a certain cleverness, and an adept at political intrigues. He was also an aspirant for office, a candidate for anything that "paid." Previous to Colonel Peyton's removal to the county, this provincial Machiavel had been considered by some, certainly considered himself, the most rising man in the district. When Colonel Peyton appeared, Miller and his clique sank into obscurity as stars disappear from the sky at sunrise. Nor was Father Ritchie ever able to do more for him as a reward for his services than to procure him a seat in the legislature, where he was a nobody and a nothing; absolutely without employment, unless Father Ritchie should wish some one's heels tripped up. In this case Miller was his right man, and in such feats he always found Bowyer equal to the occasion.

Were it consistent with the plan of this memoir, I could relate many curious episodes in the legislative career of Mr. Ritchie's henchman as recounted by the late *George Mayse*, of Bath County, who served with Colonel Peyton and Mr. Miller in the House of Delegates, and with the latter in the Constitutional Convention of 1850. Mr. Mayse was a thoroughly honest and conscientious man, a true patriot and warm friend of Colonel Peyton. He therefore felt and expressed no small disgust at the course of the *Enquirer* and Bowyer Miller towards his friend. According to Mr. Mayse, however, neither Father Ritchie nor Mr. Miller ever

played at any but a *double game*, or set their sails to catch any but a *side wind*.

Alive to the Colonel's personal popularity, these village politicians and pot-house demagogues resorted to every trick to compass their ends. They represented to the masses of their party that it was necessary to vote "early and often" against Peyton, however friendly their personal relations might be; that it would not be a vote against him individually, but against his Federal heresies, which they declared tended to monarchy. A vote, said they, against him is a shot in favour of constitutional principles—the basis alike of our model Republican Government and of the Locofoco party. In their heat they pronounced the "citadel of liberty" in danger, and they cried aloud beseeching all patriots to hasten to its defence. To the ignorant they protested that it was not a question of likes or dislikes, but altogether one between liberty and despotism. This worked well among the foreign element. Nothing else could draw this class from the Colonel's support, for many of these poor strangers remembered him as a benefactor when they came hungry and almost naked from abroad. It influenced the more ignorant natives also, and not another issue could, for he was the idol of the poor, by whom he was regarded as a brother and protector. Nor was it, said they, a question of voting for the wisest and best man. Oh, no! Were this the issue they too would vote for Peyton. In no sense, said these harpies, is it a matter of voting for men, but altogether one of voting for measures. "Measures not men," said

they, is our motto and ours are the only measures on which our Government can be administered without the destruction of all civil, religious and political liberty. In private they represented Colonel Peyton as an aristocrat, whose birth, education, and training allied him to the patrician element in society and the kingly principle in government, that, if elected, he and his party would labour to assimilate our institutions to those of Great Britain. If successful in this direction, the people, the *dear* people, would lose all which had been gained by the Revolution of 1776, and sink once more into the condition of serfs—Oldworld serfs. The fastnesses of the forests, the hollows of the mountains, the cellars and attics of the grog-shops were penetrated, ransacked, every bush beaten, every hole and corner reconnoitred to bring to the poll voters against him. Thus, ignorant, unsuspecting people, who had lived years in obscurity, and many of whom had never so much as heard his name were produced as plumpers against him. While the Locofoco's were thus employed, his friends were lulled by over confidence into a false security. They scorned and ridiculed the opposition as contemptible—too despicable to be noticed ; they contented themselves, denouncing it and its authors as demagogues engaged in dirty work which was disgraceful to the country. A meeting, however, was called of the Colonel's supporters, of the whole people indeed, at Salem, the county-town. This was attended by the county gentlemen *en masse* as well as by all classes. Colonel Peyton drove over, attended by his principal supporters and addressed the people in

a speech of such ability and eloquence that, if never before, now all opposition was supposed to be silenced. Mr. Prichard declined speaking, saying, "*He was no orator, but that when he told the people that he were a Locofoco straight out, and would vote through thick and thin for his party, whether right or wrong, they knew who their man was and where to find him.*" Mingled laughter, hisses, and drunken cheers greeted this enunciation of a purpose to "go it blind" as it was termed in the slang of the day, and respectable people dispersed to their homes, leaving the town to a considerable extent in the hands of an intoxicated rabble shouting for Pritchard and liberty. Gentlemen returned home satisfied that Colonel Peyton's election was certain beyond an accident, and a series of dinners took place in the county as a welcome to him on his return. These were kept up till the day of election. Meanwhile the Locofocos worked like beavers in the dark; frightened the timid by stories of returning despotism, bribed some by money and others by promises, and engaged many of those known to be certain voters for Peyton in business undertakings which were very profitable, but which these varlets took care should call them from the county on election day. Those who had conscientious scruples at the prospect of being absent were quieted by being told that the Colonel did not require their votes—that he would be elected by a tremendous majority. Many were thus gained over to their side through political cowardice, and others who were paid either by money or promises. Thus by one artifice or another, they succeeded on the day of

election in rolling up a majority for Mr. Prichard of seven votes. Colonel Peyton's friends were equally astonished and indignant at the result. They declared that it arose from unparalleled bribery and corruption, and they earnestly urged him to contest the election. He steadily declined all such importunities, harkened not to their counsel, declaring that he had consented to be a candidate, not to gratify any personal wishes, but solely to please his friend—his own tastes were for retirement. At their instance he had come forward; the scrutineers of the polls had declared his opponent elected, and with this verdict he should not attempt to interfere. Nor did he again refer to the election nor to the perfidious scheme by which he had been defeated. The pure and proud mind can never confide its wrongs to another, only its triumphs and its happiness.

It may be safely said, however, that he was ineffably disgusted with the excitement, intrigues, and corruption of our politics. Brief as was his public career, he had doubtless been long enough in the arena to be convinced that he who aspires to be the head of a party will find it more difficult to please his friends than to perplex his foes. That he must often act from false reasons which are weak, because he does not avow the true reasons which are strong. 'That it will be his lot to be forced on some occasions to give his consideration to the wealthy or the influential, although they may be in the wrong, and to withhold it from the energetic but necessitous, although they may be in the right. That there are moments when we must appear to sympathize,

not only with the fears of the brave, but also the follies of the wise. That he must often see some appearances that do not exist, to be blind to some that do. To be above others, he must condescend at times to be beneath himself, as the loftiest trees have the deepest roots. And without the keenest circumspection he will become conscious that his very rise will be his ruin. For a masked battery is more destructive than one that is in sight, and he will have more to dread from the secret envy of his own adherents than from the open hate of his adversaries. This envy will ever beset him, but, if determined to proceed in his career, he must not appear to suspect it. It will narrowly watch him, but he must not seem to perceive it. Even when he is anticipating all its effects, he must give no note of preparation, and in defending himself against it, he must conceal both his sword and his shield. Let him pursue success as his truest friend, and apply to confidence as his ablest counsellor. Subtract from a little great man all that he owes to opportunity and all that he owes to chance, all that he has gained by the wisdom of his friends and by the folly of his enemies, and our Brobdignag will often become a Lilliputian. I think it is Voltaire who observes, that it was very fortunate for Cromwell that he appeared upon the stage at the precise moment when the people were tired of kings, and as unfortunate for his son, Richard, that he had to make good his pretensions, at a moment when the people were equally tired of protectors.'

Having, as previously remarked, no taste for public

life under the conditions surrounding it in those days, no ambition to contest the palm with tricksters and demagogues and the "little great men" sent from the counties generally, through the influence of cross-road publicans and local demagogues, he returned to his estate with a firm determination, in accordance with the advice of Cato to his son, to pass the residue of his life in the real post of honour, the private station. His defeat, therefore, gave him the opportunity which he coveted. It may be added as a part of his history in this connection, that he was on many occasions, solicited to become a candidate for sundry offices. The principal men of that section of the State united in an effort to induce him to become a candidate for Congress. He declined all importunities, refused to give up the comforts of his home again. He only is a great man, says Steele, who can neglect the applause of the multitude, and enjoy himself independent of its favour. Most truly may it be said of this excellent man, that with him the rewards of virtue exceeded those of ambition. He sought to do good rather than be conspicuous. Notwithstanding this determination, to which he steadily adhered, he was brought forward by his friends in the Legislature, with whom the election rested, for the office of Governor of Virginia, and again for that of Senator in Congress. He would doubtless have been chosen for one or both of these positions, notwithstanding the intrigues of Father Ritchie, Bowyer, Miller, and others of the like feather, but for his persistent determination to refuse all such

distinctions and his eloquent advocacy of the claims of others to the very situations for which he himself was proposed.

The reader will doubtless agree with the author, that those upon whom honours are conferred are not always the most deserving, and that Colonel Peyton had little occasion to regret defeat. Wicked Hamon was promoted by Ahasuerus and all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, bowed to and revered him. Absalom, the rebellious son of David, stole the hearts of the men of Israel. Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, made a speech to the people, and they gave a shout, saying, "it is the voice of a God, and not of a man." But what was the end of these men? Hamon was hanged on the gibbet prepared for Mordecai; Absalom was slain by the darts of Joab, and Herod was eaten by worms, and died miserably. Mighty conquerors and their armies have covered themselves with glory. Ignorance has deified, and superstition worshipped them as gods; but had they met what they deserved, their names would have been handed down to posterity with infamy and disgrace. The fact is, the world does not always bestow honour upon real worth; hence the best of men seldom enjoy its smiles, or do so only for a time.

About this period the Governor of Virginia appointed him State proxy, to represent the interest of the Commonwealth in the meetings of the stock-holders of the James River and Kenawha Canal Company, a work by which it was sought to connect the waters of the Chesapeake and Ohio, and which originated with

Washington himself. This great work was already completed from Richmond to Lynchburg, a distance of between one and two hundred miles, receiving tolls to the extent of 800,000,00 dols. per annum. With his usual energy and fidelity to trusts imposed on him, he devoted himself, without pay, for years, to the judicious management of this company, attending all its meetings and writing all the annual reports of the board. The present (1873) secretary of that company, William Preston Munford, once said to the writer, that he did not know what the company would do without him, he was the life and soul of the whole undertaking.

Previous to the election of 1844, he was invited to prepare a preamble and resolutions embodying the principles of the Whig party, and in favour of the election of Henry Clay to the Presidency, to be submitted to a public meeting of the Whigs of Roanoke. This led to the following paper from his pen, setting forth the main principles of the party, and giving, in vigorous language, his opinion of the great Kentuckian Statesman. The preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted. Mr. Clay subsequently became the candidate of the party, but was defeated. He had been too long identified with the history of his country—was too good and great a man to answer the purposes of his party as a candidate.

The following is the first and an imperfect draught of COLONEL PEYTON'S resolutions. It was found among some calcined rubbish, after the burning of his mansion in 1870.

WHIG MEETING IN ROANOKE.

The Whigs of Roanoke being assembled for the purpose of party organization, and especially with a view to forming themselves into a "Clay Club," deem the occasion suitable for announcing the leading principles on which they intend to conduct the coming Presidential contest.

Acting, as they trust, in harmony with the great body of the party throughout the union, they are anxious to secure the moral weight which is the just reward of elevated principles and ingenuous conduct. They wish to avoid all surreptitious measures of assault or defence, to come into battle openly and boldly, with their principles emblazoned upon every fold of their standards, thus inviting the scrutiny and defying the power of their opponents. A victory gained by fraud and deception would be valueless in their estimation, since it would destroy the public confidence in their integrity as a party, and jeopardize the popularity of the principles which they profess, and upon the ultimate ascendancy of which they conscientiously believe the stability and efficiency of our institutions depend. They anxiously desire a just exposition of the political creed of the opposite party, and a fair and honourable issue upon their conflicting principles. They are confident of success if they are thus met before the nation in a spirit of candour and fair dealing. They believe if they can prevail with their opponents to define their party faith clearly and unequivocally, and to stand

by it sincerely and honestly in every quarter of the Union without respect to the political prejudices of any locality, that there is sufficient patriotism, intelligence and enlightened self-interest among the people to insure their success. To warn the people from the rocks and quicksands of unrestrained and licentious democracy to the safe haven of well-regulated Republicanism. When the honest masses understand the spirit of Locofocoism abroad in the land, generating the most destructive moral and political principles, despoiling States of their credit, and thus weakening the obligations of common honesty between individuals; when they see one of the two parties of the country, identifying itself to a considerable extent with these lawless repudiators and unscrupulous "bond breakers," who, in the spirit of wild reform and mad innovation, trample under foot every precedent which time, experience, wisdom and patriotism have established; neither respecting the judgment of a Washington, nor the opinion of the pure and spotless patriots who assisted him in modelling our institutions and giving us a hope of enduring national existence and national glory, they believe that the sober and reflecting portion of the people will tremble for perpetuity of our Government, and will rally to its defence under the banner of our party whose name is the synonyme of constitutional liberty.

Not wishing in this hasty address to elaborate the views of the Whig party, but simply to announce the cardinal features of our political faith, leaving comment for future occasions, we declare,

- I. That we are in favour of a NATIONAL BANK, being firmly convinced that all the industrial interests of the country, whether agricultural, commercial or manufacturing, depend for much of their prosperity upon a circulating medium of equal value in every part of our country, and in sufficient abundance to meet the necessities and convenience of trade.
- II. We are in favour of a TARIFF, which while it affords a revenue sufficient to meet the wants of the Government economically administered, shall be so adjusted as to foster and cherish our infant manufactures, and at the same time awaken a design for reciprocity in foreign nations by the imposition of counteracting duties upon the productions of such of these as impose heavy burdens upon our principal exports, such as cotton and tobacco.
- III. We are in favour of an equitable distribution of the proceeds arising from the sales of the PUBLIC LANDS among the several States, believing that the public domain is the rightful property of the States; as such we consider the authority exercised over these lands by the General Government as purely fiduciary, and that the terms of the trust precludes all the graduation schemes, and schemes of partial cession, which have been advocated at different times by the respective branches of the Democratic party. Relying upon the customs or impot dues as an abundant source of revenue for the support of the Government economically administered, we wish to divert from the National

Treasury this unnecessary and redundant tributary, and pour its rich blessings into the more legitimate State channels, where it will diffuse countless benefits in restoring their shattered credit, in providing the means of general education, and in opening up new and enlarging old markets for the husbandman and manufacturer, by improving the means of intercommunication and developing the resources of our interior country.

IV. We are in favour of the ONE TERM PRINCIPLE—we think experience has shewn in these degenerate days of the Republic, that lust of office is apt to swallow up all sentiments of public virtue, and that where the President is re-eligible his first term is often engrossed by disgraceful intrigues to secure a re-election, by the disgusting scenes of official profligacy, and by the shameless prostitution of offices of the highest responsibility to the unhallowed purposes of party. We think that destroying all hope of re-election would, by withdrawing the temptation, increase the chances of an independent and honourable administration of the General Government, a consummation most devoutly to be wished.

V. We are in favour of a thorough *reform* in the tone and spirit of the Government and its officers, to bring back the Washingtonian standard of official qualification, and to infuse into the Government that enlarged, liberal, and patriotic spirit which regulated the policy of that illustrious man, the

lustre of whose virtues defies the virulence of party, and who, standing up before posterity in the full proportions of his matchless wisdom and purity, challenges the world for an equal. Instead of bestowing offices, instituted for the public benefit, on unscrupulous Demagogues, as a reward of their sordid services, we would have them conferred on men of elevated principles and unquestionable qualifications—men who never forget that, “they have a country to serve while they have a party to obey.”

VI. Finally, we are in favour of HENRY CLAY as our next President. In announcing our preference for this distinguished patriot and statesman, we feel a just pride in presenting to the consideration of our fellow citizens one whose virtues and services give him the highest claim to the first office in the gift of his countrymen. Imbued with a spirit at once bold, generous, acute, comprehensive in its grasp and brilliant in its conceptions, yet capable of the severest investigation and minutest detail; ennobled by a patriotism which diffuses itself over his whole country, rising in every exigency above all mere party considerations and sinking in the cause of his country all the conflicting prejudices and feelings of individuals and factions which jeopardize her honour or her welfare. Enriched with an experience long, active, conspicuous in its trials, embracing one of the most eventful periods of our history and identifying him with all the great and important

measures which mark the era of his brilliant career! regulated by a judgment, subtle, profound, matured, and harmonizing with the principles of the Whig party; and finally, as a capital to crown this noble Corinthian column, sustained by a fidelity and fearlessness which can be relied on to enforce the principles we profess, we confidently recommend him to the American people for the first office within their gift, and as a worthy successor to the "Father of his country."

It is obvious from these resolutions that he had large and accurate information on political affairs; that he knew what was necessary to make a people great, prosperous, and respected. With what earnestness he denounces those miserable profligates who have brought American credit into disrepute, and made the name a reproach on many a Bourse by their "bond breaking," repudiating doctrines. To a man however in his station it would have been a real reproach to have remained ignorant of the history, laws, and constitution of his country—to have had no certain, well ascertained policy for her wise Government.

In the political affairs of this election, he took some part, making eloquent speeches in favour of Mr. Clay's election at Salem, Fincastle, Danville, Lynchbury, Richmond and other places, but he avoided those warm and angry debates, which are calculated only to inflame the passions and alienate parties. He endeavoured by cool and deliberate

disquisitions on politics to enlighten the minds of the people and lead them to a right judgment. He had too often seen the effects of ignorance, in leading the multitude astray in national affairs, not to exert himself to scatter its clouds. Under its influence, the best measures of public policy had often been condemned, and the worst obtained popular applause; the wisest and purest of our Statesmen had been ostracised, and a shallow and noisy race of demagogues foisted into office and loaded with honours. He laboured, therefore, earnestly to spread true knowledge abroad and dispel the mists of ignorance which overspread a portion of the people.

There are some men who appear great only while the splendour of rank, or the bustle of station dazzles the eyes of the spectators; others become magnified as they recede from the public view, and are seen like stars in the distant sky. Of this latter description was William Madison Peyton, a man with too much of the weakness of humanity to have altogether escaped censure; but whose memory is clear of any considerable stain.

Most interesting was it to see him in the retirement which now followed. Here he communed with his own heart, studied the Holy Scriptures, contemplated the works of creation, and formed plans of great usefulness. His mind was free to enter upon all these important subjects and it cannot be doubted that he calmly considered what he would do for his own kinsfolk, friends, and acquaintances, and also even for his enemies.

To a public-spirited man like himself, it is equally beyond doubt that he considered how he might best serve his country and the world. And none of us are without the power of doing something for others if so disposed. If we have wisdom, we can contrive for them; if wealth, we can supply their wants; if power, we can protect and advance them; and if piety and goodness predominate in our hearts, we can, and do, strive to lead them to God. Relatives claim our first care and attention. Are they poor, afflicted, despised, ignorant, or wicked? We should think how we may improve their circumstances, restore their health, redeem their character, inform their minds, or amend woes. Friends next claim our attention. Can we make them happier, more useful, or respectable? Next our acquaintances. They may not have served us; but that consideration should not prevent our benevolent plans to serve them—even our enemies, should share our good will. They have used us spitefully; let us try to do them good. The attempt will prove a blessing to us, and it may be also a blessing to them. In this spirit his retirement was spent, nor did he forget that his country had claims upon him. He thought how he might best serve its interests and promote its happiness—how eloquently the foregoing resolutions denounce repudiation and all bond breakers. He sought out plans of public utility, and exercised his influence to carry them into effect. In other words, without ostentation, noise, or boasting he endeavoured to do all the good he could. During his retreat he applied

himself to literary and scientific pursuits with as much earnest devotion as if his livelihood depended upon his success. He doubtless realized the force of the remark of Hamlet,

What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed ? a beast—no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and God-like reason
To rest in us unused.

During his scientific studies and investigations he discovered that cannel coal, which had not previously been found in America, always existed in England in the region of bituminous coal. From this and other circumstances he argued that search would lead to its discovery in the bituminous coal fields of America. If so, it would be a most important discovery. Accordingly in the summer of 1845, he proceeded, in company with a few practical miners whom he hired for the purpose, to the coal beds of the Kenawha. The party spent some time in explorations and researches on the waters tributary to the Great Kenawha in the county of Boone, and the correctness of his judgment was shown, and his labours rewarded, by the discovery of probably the most extensive cannel coal field in the United States. His first discovery was at a point on the coal river, about thirty miles from its junction with the Great Kenawha. At sundry spots on the river between this point and the Kenawha he came upon other veins of

this mineral, varying from two to six feet in height and thickness. After these valuable findings of hidden wealth, he purchased 30,000 acres of this land and proceeded to develop the mineral resources of that region, with which important work he was occupied down to the period of the civil war in 1861. At the spot of his original discovery a town was laid out and in his honour called *Peytona*, which is now a flourishing place of business.

He also ascertained in his numerous experiments with this coal that it possessed a variety of useful and valuable properties. Among other things, that candles might be made from it, surpassing those of wax in hardness and beauty. Also that the tar products of this and the bituminous coal, decomposed by the oil of vitrol, yielded, among other valuable substances, one now called *paraffine*, resembling, when bleached and purified, wax or spermaceti; and that it burnt with a clear white flame, free from smoke. Since then this substance has become widely known the world over, and is largely used by all candle-making companies, though at first this and other results which he announced seemed more like the dream of a visionary, than the sober reasonings of a modern utilitarian philosopher. The magic of chemistry as applied by other distinguished American and European savans soon established the correctness of his theories. It is probable that he himself did not foresee the value of the conclusions he arrived at, which were certainly pregnant with important results. But it was impossible

that a man of his knowledge could direct his attention to such subjects without benefit arising therefrom.

During the period he was engaged in his mining operations he spent a hundred thousand dollars of his private means on the improvement of the coal river, seeking to make the stream navigable for steamers of considerable tonnage and thus to avoid trans-shipment of cargoes from the barges which left Peytona, on their arrival in the Kenawha. He had not succeeded to the extent of his wishes when the civil war put a stop to his operations. A New York company on the joint stock or limited liability principle, which had been organized in Wall Street under his auspices, continued through the war to work the mines upon a minor scale, and, as far as the disorganized condition of the labour and business affairs of the country would admit, to carry on the work for improving the navigation of the river.

The perserving energy with which he prosecuted his labours on the Coal River for many years, was the subject of general remark. The great improvement which took place in this remote part of the country in the manners and customs of the earlier inhabitants, in the roads and other means of communication, in the development of industry, and the enhancement in the value of property, the legitimate results of his operations, caused him to be considered as a public benefactor, and his name to be everywhere revered by the warm-hearted and affectionate mountaineers.

The fame he acquired by these operations, the

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success which attended his practical pursuits recalls Sallust's remark upon Cato, that the less he coveted glory, the more he acquired it.

Several joint-stock companies were organized in New York under his auspices for working the Peytona mines, which are, in 1873, in successful operation. During one of his business visits to New York, in 1861, he addressed the letter embodied in the next chapter to his old friend Mr. Rives, on the subject of the deplorable political situation and the impending crisis.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the Autumn of 1860, the United States Presidential election occurred, an event ordinary enough in itself, but which became the cause, or at least the occasion, of one of the greatest political revolutions which have ever changed the fortunes of a nation. A revolution it was which overwhelmed the South with disasters, greater far than those which conquests bring about, but which in the slow progress of events has been succeeded by a gradual bettering of the condition of the subdued people, and also by the elevation of a servile race to a position of political equality with their former masters. Placed after centuries of servitude in this new position, for which they had had no preparation, it remains yet to be proved that the African race is endowed by nature with any great mental vigor or aptitude for intellectual labour and improvement, such as is requisite for those who are invested with the rights of freemen and the responsibility of self government.

The fear so long entertained by patriots that at some inauspicious moment a storm would arise in the South,